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ASHFORD URBAN DISTRICT.



Medical Officer's
Annual Report for 1909.

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Mr. Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Gentlemen,

I have much pleasure in presenting for your consideration my annual report on the health of the district for the year 1909.

Vital Statistics.

The population of Ashford, calculated for the middle of the year on the basis of the increase between the last two census years—1891 and 1901,—is 14,824.

The population of North Ashford, that is the part of the district lying on the north side of the railway line, is 9,692, that of South Ashford 5,132.

During the year the number of deaths registered in the district was 153. To these must be added twelve deaths of residents dying in public institutions outside the district, and seven deaths of non-residents must be subtracted therefrom. This gives us 158 as the corrected number.

Our death-rate, therefore, calculated on the above figures is 10.65 per 1,000 population.

The death-rate for North Ashford is 10.62, and that for South Ashford 10.71.

The average age at death, excluding infants under one year, was fifty-seven.

At the end of my report you will find Table I. giving the causes of deaths, and comparing the returns for the two districts.

The death rates from all the causes are below the average rates for the country generally.

The infant mortality, or the deaths of infants under one year old, calculated as a rate per thousand births, is 89.6. This is higher than last year, but is below the average for the last ten years, and is considerably below the rate for the country generally.

THE ZYMOTIC DEATH-RATE, or death-rate from the seven principal epidemic diseases, is .67, which is a satisfactorily low figure.

THE BIRTH-RATE. The number of births registered during the year was 295, giving a birth-rate of 19.90, which is very low, and shows a considerable falling off from former years.

Housing.

The great majority of the houses in Ashford consist of small villas built under the existing bye-laws. In consequence they are well built and in excellent sanitary condition. With the exception of a few houses in the old part of the town there is ample air space around all the dwellings.

The town is devoid of slum areas therefore.

The erection of new houses is under the supervision of the Surveyor after the plans have been passed by the Buildings Committee.

During October a large part of South Ashford was flooded, the principal streets affected being Beaver Road, Stour Avenue, Rugby Road and Rugby Gardens. As soon as the water had subsided I inspected all this area with the Surveyor. Notices were served on all owners of property in the flooded district requiring that all water should be removed from beneath floorings and the premises put into good sanitary condition.

A second inspection was made fourteen days later to see that these requirements had been carried out.

Water was found to have collected under the floors of six houses in Rugby Gardens. These cavities have been filled in and covered with a layer of concrete, and the floors properly ventilated. The Ashford Benevolent Society did much to mitigate the discomfort and insanitariness

caused by the floods by granting coal and coke to the poorer houses in the affected neighbourhood.

There is great need for more moderately-rented houses in the town. At present a man earning 21s. a week or less has often to pay six or seven shillings a week rent, and cannot get a house for less. Several cases of overcrowding occurred during the year and were dealt with. In this connection a detailed inspection was made of the Mace Cottages by the Surveyor and myself. Each house was inspected and all the rooms measured for floor space, ventilation, light and cubic content. Enquiries as to the number of inhabitants were also made.

As a consequence in two cases notices were served on the occupiers of cottages that their dwellings were overcrowded. In both cases the nuisance was abated.

Water Supply.

The Town water supply is derived from four wells situated on Henwood Farm, sunk into the lower green sand and connected with one another by means of adits. These wells are about forty feet deep.

The water is pumped through a rising main to two underground reservoirs at the top of the town holding 280,000 gallons and 36,000 gallons respectively.

From the following figures it will be seen that by far the majority of houses use the public supply.

Number of Houses in District	3,345
Number using Ashford Public Supply	2,930
Number using Willesboro' Public Supply	110
Number using Wells or other Supply	305

During the year an analysis has been made of water from seven wells in the district supplying twenty-two houses, etc. All these have been condemned as unfit for drinking purposes, and the public supply has been laid on instead.

The public supply is analysed quarterly by the Clinical Research Association. Appended is a copy of the last analysis.

The supply continues to be considerably in excess of the needs of the town.

Water Analysis.

	Grains per gallon.
Total solids (dried at 120° C.)	34.65
Combined Chlorine	2.15
Expressed as Na. Cl.	3.55
Nitrogen as Nitrates	0.02
Nitrites	nil.
Saline Ammonia	0.0007
Albuminoid Ammonia	0.0023
Oxygen absorbed in 4 hrs. at 27° C.	0.011
Total Hardness	24.3°
Lead or Copper	nil.

Milk Supply.

The milk consumed in the Urban District is derived from farms in the immediate neighbourhood. The quality of the milk is generally good, being mostly from herds of cows pastured in the fields. There are eleven cowsheds in the district; these have been inspected quarterly and are all in a satisfactory condition.

With regard to the milkshops—these have been kept and conducted in a satisfactory manner. There has been greater care taken to prevent contamination from flies and dust.

All milkshops, dairies and cowsheds have been regularly inspected quarterly, and the following defects were found in the course of these visits:—

Cowsheds—want of cleanliness	1
„ want of drainage	2
„ want of light	2
Milkshops—milk kept uncovered	2

All these defects have since been remedied.

The visits made during the year were as follows:—

	NUMBER ON REGISTER.	NUMBER OF VISITS.
Dairies	3	12
Milkshops	14	56
Cowsheds	11	44
Total	28	112

Slaughter-houses.

There are twelve licensed slaughter-houses in the district. These are inspected quarterly and the bye-laws are being duly observed in all cases.

Defects were found in two cases which have since been remedied.

The present arrangements for meat inspection are quite inadequate. There is no special meat inspector and animals are killed at these slaughter-houses at any time without any notice being given.

The Sanitary Authority are dependent on chance information for the detection of diseased animals being slaughtered.

During the year one case of a tuberculous cow being slaughtered and dressed for sale was detected upon information supplied by the police.

The carcase was seized and destroyed by a magistrate's order and the owner summoned and fined.

Inspections of carcasses of slaughtered animals were made on two other occasions in consequence of information received, but in each case the animal was found not to be tuberculous.

Sewerage.

The sewage of the town is carried to the sewage farm at Bybrook for treatment; that from South Ashford being pumped, that from the higher ground flowing there by gravity.

Day and night pumping are necessary at the low level sewage pumping station to efficiently deal with the amount of sewage and prevent overflow of crude sewage into the Stour.

Until the separation of the storm water from the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Works is accomplished some pollution of the river must continue in wet weather.

The Council now has under consideration the agreement with the Company for doing this work, so there is at last some prospect of a settlement being effected in this matter.

At the sewage farm the sewage is first mixed with lime and alumina and is then run into settling tanks, after which it is pumped into the filtration areas.

The area of the farm is eight acres, and it is divided into eleven filtration areas. The filtration areas are terraced and each is underdrained with land drains three feet below the surface leading into an effluent outfall drain discharging into the river Stour.

A 35-h.p. suction gas engine and plant have been installed, which can deal with the entire dry weather flow of sewage, pumping the fluid part on to the land and the sludge into the bays. This is a great improvement, as, until this was done, a certain amount of the unfiltered sewage passed into the river owing to the pumping plant being inadequate to deal with an amount of sewage largely in excess of that which the farm was originally designed to deal with.

Since last year the Council has extended the Engine Room and decided to duplicate the machinery by a 60-h.p. suction gas engine and producer plant.

The present area of land is insufficient for efficient filtration, as the filtration areas cannot get sufficient rest to allow them to absorb oxygen from the air before they are again flooded.

Scavenging.

House refuse is removed daily by the Urban Council's refuse carts. The refuse is deposited by each householder in a proper receptacle outside his dwelling and is collected in the early morning by the carts, which remove it to the refuse depots at Bybrook and South Ashford. At the depot it is piled in heaps and burnt, the residuum being given to the farmers for use as manure.

This method of daily collection works most satisfactorily, as all refuse is removed before it has time to putrefy and become offensive, which was far from being the case under the old arrangement, when dustbins were emptied only once a week, and a part of the district once in three weeks. The work of scavenging is completed each week-day before 10 a.m. throughout the town.

The disposal of excrement is entirely by means of w.c.'s, which in the great majority of houses are provided with proper flushing tanks.

Common Lodging Houses.

There are only two of these establishments on the register. Infringements of the bye-laws were found in both these establishments in the course of the routine inspection, and the defects have since been remedied. Inspections were made twice during the year.

Offensive Trades.

The only premises coming under the bye-laws regulating these trades are :

Two rag and bone stores,
One tallow chandler,
One fellmonger.

Complaints of the nuisance caused by the smell arising from the tallow chandler's premises were received. I visited these premises on several occasions with the Surveyor, and alterations were made in the chimney and flues, which resulted in a great amelioration of the nuisance.

Schools.

It was not necessary to close any of the public elementary schools in order to check the spread of infectious disease.

I made eight visits to schools during the year to investigate points arising out of inquiries concerning cases of infectious disease.

During this year a commencement was made of the medical inspection of children attending the public elementary schools under the scheme inaugurated by the Kent Education Committee. Only children of the following ages were examined :—

1. "Entrants" or children attaining the age of five years during the year.
2. "Leavers" or children aged thirteen years and over.

There were five schools to be inspected and the table below gives a short summary of the numbers examined and the principal defects found. The parents in Ashford seemed to welcome the inspection and in no case did any parent object to the inspection. I should like to record my appreciation of the willing and invaluable help always given me most courteously by the Teachers.

	National.			British.			Council.			S.E. & C.R.			R.C.	
	Infants.	Boys	Girls.	Infants.	Boys	Girls.	Infants.	Boys	Girls.	Infants.	Boys	Girls.		Totals.
Examined	79	68	55	54	66	35	91	65	86	128	75	43	22	867
DEFECTS.														
Eyes	3	7	2	5	6	5	4	8	14	2	9	12	3	80
Eyelids	1	—	2	—	—	1	1	1	3	—	—	—	—	9
Deafness	3	2	2	4	2	1	2	—	1	2	3	2	1	25
Teeth	—	1	1	2	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	6
Breathing	8	1	5	2	1	1	3	2	3	14	1	6	6	53
Mental	—	—	2	—	—	1	1	1	2	2	—	—	4	13
Heart	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Deformities	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	5
Lice	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	19	3	—	1	4	—	29
Other	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

Infectious Diseases.

Notifications of infectious disease were made up principally of Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria. As last year, cases kept occurring at intervals, apparently quite unconnected with one another.

There were three deaths from diphtheria. There was but little non-notifiable infectious disease, and no necessity arose for closing any of the schools.

In Table III. at the end of my report particulars are given of the cases of infectious disease notified and comparison is made with former years.

With the consent of the Council I am, during 1910, introducing a system of notification, by which Head Teachers

of elementary schools will keep me informed of any cases of the minor non-notifiable infectious diseases that may occur in their schools. By this means I hope to be able to keep more in touch with these diseases, and to be able to take measures to prevent their spreading. Hitherto I have generally only come on the scene when it had become a question of whether or no the schools should be closed.

Isolation Hospital.

The Ashford Isolation Hospital is situated close to Warren Lane, which is a turning out of the Maidstone Road.

The three blocks comprising the hospital stand on an eminence, about a quarter of a mile from the main road.

Each block consists of a galvanised iron building on brick foundations.

The walls have a double felt lining. Water and gas are supplied from the public service of the town.

Each block consists of two wards, but besides these there are two small isolation wards in the cottage attached to the oldest block.

In all there are thirty-five available beds.

The buildings are surrounded by extensive gardens and grounds some six acres in extent.

The sewage is disposed of by irrigation.

In cases of infectious disease, after the patient has been removed to the Isolation Hospital, all infected clothing, bedding, etc., is collected and disinfected by means of the hot air apparatus.

Infected rooms are disinfected by means of formalin vapour.

The sanitary condition of the premises is thoroughly inspected and any defects are put right.

During the year 35 patients were treated in the hospital.

Scarlet Fever	25 cases.
Diphtheria	7 cases.
Enteric Fever	3 cases.

The expenditure was as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Wages—Nurses and Caretakers	169	0	0
Extra Nursing	21	0	6
Food	84	8	8
Washing and Cleaning	15	2	6
Carting Coal and Coke, etc.	9	4	10
Coal and Coke	26	2	1
Gas	18	7	8
Horse Hire for removing patients	17	15	11
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Total	£361	2	2

The total number of days the various patients were under treatment was 1,654.

This gives the cost per patient per day as 4s. 4½d.

This is a considerably higher figure than last year, but is accounted for by the fact that whilst the chief items of expenditure, wages and establishment expenses, remained the same, the number of patients treated was nearly half.

Tuberculosis.

The most important event under this heading was the passing of a resolution by the Council adopting a system of voluntary notification. Notifications will commence next year and will be paid for on the same scale as compulsory notifications.

Notices explaining in simple language rudimentary facts as to the nature, methods of infection and means of prevention of this disease have been printed and circulated by the Urban Council throughout the district, and copies have been hung up in prominent positions in most of the factories and workshops.

In cases where death has occurred from this complaint the sanitary authority are willing to gratuitously disinfect the rooms which have been occupied by the diseased person.

The West Ashford Workhouse has accommodation for a limited number of pauper cases of persons suffering from this disease, but there is no provision for hospital treatment of cases arising amongst the other classes of the population.

Sanitary Inspection.

During the year 197 houses and premises have been inspected by the Sanitary Inspector, and the following nuisances abated :—

Defective bell traps and gullies	26
Defective eaves, guttering and rainwater pipes	8
Stopped drains and w.c.'s	14
Putrid meat, fish, etc.	5
Pig-styes and manure accumulations	6
Dangerous roofs, fences, walls, etc.	6
Filthy houses	3
Foul ditches and refuse accumulation	34
Chicken and rabbit keeping	7
Defective paving, etc.	3
Drains taken up and relaid	4
House drains tested	15
Sink water and rain pipes disconnected	5
Other drainage defects	7
Dustbins	3

Besides the above I have, with the Surveyor, made systematic inspections of the following districts:—Mace Cottages, Rugby Gardens, Gravel Walk.

Factories and Workshops Act.

The number of premises on the register coming under the above heading was as follows :—

	NUMBER.	INSPECTIONS.
Factories	38	148
Workshops	70	267
Bakehouses	16	64
Outworkers' Premises	8	28
Totals	132	507

Defects found :—

Want of cleanliness	5
Want of drainage	0
Defective sanitary accommodation	2
Overcrowding	2
Factories registered during year	1
Workshops „ „ „	18
Factories removed from Register	1
Underground Bakehouses in use	2

During the year I have made 104 visits in addition to those made under the Factories and Workshops Act, and the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order. They are made up as follows :—

Infectious disease enquiries	56
Slaughter-houses	24
Common Lodging Houses	4
Schools	8
Other	12

I have attended :—

Council Meetings	4
Sanitary Committee	9
Special Meetings	3
Sub-Committee Meetings	5

I have made the following reports :—

Monthly	8
Quarterly	4

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

Claude M. Vernon,

Medical Officer of Health.

TABLE I.—SHOWING CAUSES OF DEATHS.

CAUSE OF DEATH.	NORTH ASHFORD.	SOUTH ASHFORD.	TOTAL.	RATE PER 1,000 POPULATION.
Diphtheria	1	2	3	.20
Croup	1	—	1	.067
Enteric Fever ..	1	2	3	.20
Influenza	2	1	3	.20
Enteritis	—	1	1	.067
Gastritis	1	—	1	.067
Puerperal Fever ..	1	—	1	.067
Phthisis	11	5	16	1.14
Other Tuberculous Diseases .. }	1	4	5	.33
Cancer	8	2	10	.67
Bronchitis	12	4	16	1.14
Pneumonia	4	4	8	.53
Pleurisy	1	—	1	.067
Alcoholism	1	—	1	.067
Venereal Disease ..	1	—	1	.067
Premature Birth ..	5	2	7	.46
Parturition	1	—	1	.067
Heart Disease ..	12	12	24	1.61
Accidents	4	1	5	.33
Suicides	2	—	2	.134
Other Causes ..	33	15	48	3.23

TABLE II.—COMPARING BIRTHS AND DEATHS
WITH FORMER YEARS.

YEAR.	POPULATION.	BIRTHS.	RATE.	DEATHS.	RATE.
1898	11,593	254	21.94	144	12.42
1899	11,710	294	25.10	172	14.18
1900	11,850	317	26.32	164	13.83
1901	12,808	296	23.11	163	12.80
1902	13,094	318	24.27	152	11.60
1903	13,328	334	25.06	134	10.05
1904	13,567	281	20.70	166	12.23
1905	13,809	307	22.08	140	10.13
1906	14,056	316	22.48	173	12.30
1907	14,300	305	21.32	175	12.23
1908	14,564	331	22.72	159	10.91
1909	14,824	295	19.90	158	10.65

TABLE III.—CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES
NOTIFIED.

Disease.	1899.	North Ashford.	South Ashford.	1903.	1907.	1906.	1905.	1904.	1903.	1902.	1901.	1900.	1899.	1898.
Diphtheria ..	16	6	10	5	2	2	4	36	10	10	2	1	16	6
Erysipelas ..	3	2	1	3	3	2	3	7	10	2	3	5	4	3
Scarlet Fever ..	28	22	6	56	35	53	46	48	1	8	17	13	25	22
Enteric Fever ..	5	3	2	2	13	6	7	18	4	—	7	1	19	15
Puerperal Fever	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	1	—
Small Pox ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—
Chicken Pox ..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	11	—	—	—	—
Totals ..	53	34	19	66	53	63	60	110	36	31	29	24	65	46